THOUSANDS OF NEW YORK CHILDREN CELEBRATE FLAG DAY

Photo by Medem Photo Service.

This interesting photograph shows one of the numerous scenes attending the celebration of Flag Day. The pledge of loyalty was taken by 800,000 school children in various parts of the city. This picture shows the pupils of Public School 132 with Principal Thomas C. Hilligag celebrating on the hill at 189th street and Wadsworth avenue.

STIRRING LIFE ON A BRITISH MERCHANTMAN IN WAR TIME

Adventures of an American on the Durham Castle From the Canaries to Tilbury Docks

By LESLEY R. BATES.

THE old gray sided Durham Castle catted her anchor and headed for the open sea. The twinkling lights along the shore and in high hillside homes where the vineyards stood were the only indications of the quaint little island. But all around lay dark shadows with sidelights and portholes agleam.

These were the German freighters doomed to voluntary internment until the seas were again liberated from the war lords. A dash to sea would have been a very reckless performance at this time, for Churchill's watch dogs hovered in the offing and gloated for a chance to capture one of these nitrate ships.

My own ship, which I had just left, was a little nitrate mine in herself. Many thousands of tons were piled high in her hold—"saltpetre" as the sailors call it, from Iquique, Taltal, Coquimbo and dreary Antofagasta tumbled at the foot of the Andes as they step into the Pacific. There they lay, then, at anchor, fifteen great nitrate ships, and there was the little Illyria and the grand old Menes which had brought me all the way from San Francisco to this little Spanish island off Africa.

But now the Durham Castle was headed for the open sea and England. Las Palmas grew ever smaller. The lonely ships disappeared in a flying sea mist and the lighthouse on Teneriffe pulsed far off on a high point of the island.

For hours I leaned over the rail thinking of many things; the long pull down the Pacific coast; the curious natives in Central America and their thatch huts flanking the shoreline under star reaching palms, the massive Peruvians with thick graven faces and aged eyes dreamy with the dreams of the Incas, and the sly yet simple Chilean folk chasing huge sea lions in small boats or lounging on the quay at Valparaiso, sash belted, narrow faced, and always smoking; the gaudy Catholic churches and the black veiled senoritas; the nitre ports and the ever rumbling nitre trains stepping down the Andes with shrieking breaks set.

I well remembered quaint, cold Antofagasta just standing off the whole Pacific Ocean on the Tropic of Capricorn. The north star hung very, very low. Great heavy seas boomed all night along sombre beaches, and struck and suddenly flanked white and raced like a thousand Pegasuses, leaping at times manes flying, white, sheer white. And the Andes stood quietly by, close by, laden with stars and gleamed down upon the swaying ocean and the pounding seas and listened to the nitrate trains climbing down their flanks to Antofagasta and to the waiting freighters rocking at their anchors.

And Magellan—what did I not think about Magellan, where the Cape doves flew and the albatross over the waters. Wild unruly waters, indeed, we met, deserted, pouncing down from the Antarctic circle to turn hell loose at the Horn and to nibble in a rather ineffective fashion at the last peaks of the Andes which jutted from the water as a thousand snow smothered islands. The good ship Menes had its own fearful nightmares for four fearful nights while the keel plates trembled like jelly, as half the near Antarctic Ocean reared over the bow and crashed along the iron decks and sprawled aft somehow into the ocean again. Thank God, I said to myself, musing over the rail of the Durham Castle, thank God we've got through with Magellan.

And now again in the calm serenity of the north tropics this lazy Cape Town intermediate sauntered along toward the north star, just peeping over the sealine. One week away lay England, provided this ship were not taken prize by some Emden or Karlsruhe that lay closer. Indeed, there was nothing absurd in that provision, for two German cruisers lay outside the three mile limit of the Grand Canaries, from which we were proceeding.

Some time later I was surprised to see the Teneriffe light still pulsing far astern. Many of the passengers were herded in a dark mass looking at it from the after deck.

"We're slow getting away from Teneriffe, aren't we," I remarked to a sailor.

"Teneriffe, huh!" he shouted in my ears above the wind. "My God, man, that's a battleship!"

"Good night!" I said, instantly deciding it must be a German warship.

And I have noticed since that every time a man-o'-war appeared upon the horizon all the passengers immediately took it for granted that it must necessarily be an enemy vessel. It was such a delightful way to take life, anyway. Even when we were able to note with a powerful glass, as we were at times, that the Cross of St. George was flying on her, still with magnificent courage we always felt quite sure it must be a vessel of the enemy. She was just deliberately trying to deceive us.

So, filled with apprehension, I too braced my legs and peered over the rail at the distant light on the ocean. Far below the throbbing screw churned up a white wake that sped away into the darkness like homing pigeons suddenly released in the night. Far above, the low glow at the masthead looked like a lost star swaying to and fro, to and fro, as the old boat took the seas over the bow and spilled them by the beam. And above the wind roar the wireless was spitting on the bridge in sharp pinges of dot and dash. Miracles of miracles, it would be all translated into the Queen's own English by morning and posted in type for the edification of the pasengers.

But there was that dreadful vessel chasing after us.

"Probably just trailing us until they get final orders from 'ome," announced somebody behind a glowing pipe.

"Trailed be 'anged, man. Do you think she's going to waste coals trailing a bloomin' sea cow the likes of us? Not much she ain't. She's going to haul alongside and put a prize crew aboard, that's wot," expostulated another invisible smoker.

"That's wot, I take it," responded a third, rallying to the support of this thrilling disaster. The worse it was, the more supporters would be standing by to defend it. "There ain't nothing to prevent. Now if there ain't nothing to prevent, I says that's wot."

"But the law, sir. You've got to obey the law." This was a courageous man, who dared to defy the popular conviction that we were doomed.

"Law, sir," was the retort. "There ain't going to be no law in this 'ere war. It's too bloody a war, sir, for the law. Why, man, it's going to be the greatest war in the world." He semed delighted at the idea.

In the meantime a peculiar change appeared to take place in our pursuer. Where at first we saw but one solitary light high on her masthead, there were now three lights visible, two white lights high up and one green one, much smaller and lower. Obviously the only green light on a ship must be the port lantern. The two higher ones must be on the two mastheads. What was the consternation of our passengers to learn that all their premonitions of evil days falling upon us were without the shadow of justification. For this strange battleship had turned and flanked and was standing off to bear away.

I myself was inwardly pleased at this, though I dared not reveal my joy to all these Glooms from the African colonies. I even began to hope of really reaching England. But when an hour or two later our passengers standing watch over the enemy had given up all hopes of being captured and languishing in a German prison or detention camp all felt it their bounden duty to apologize for its extraordinary conduct in turning up its nose at such a fair prize.

"They must 'a' thought we were a battleship too," hazarded one.

After a pause, "So 'elp me, boys, if I don't have a notion she was a Britisher! Now I don't want to seem foolish, but I think that's wot. She must 'a' spoken with our wireless and found out wot's wot—that we wuz peaceful subjects from the reef [Diamond Reef] going 'ome to die, 'aving got phthisis in the mines, and bearing nobody no harm, Gawd bless 'im."

This explanation seemed to appeal strongly to the party, which accordingly went off to bed with a great load off its mind.

Much might be said of interesting nature on this trip. But time is short and we must on to London.

Early in the dawn twilight we struck the Channel and a blowing fog that set our siren blaring over the water. Clad in heavy coats as some meagre protest against such an unpleasant reception to faithful colonials, as most of us were, by the Lord Harry, we stood at dawn on deck and braved the weather. Here was the mouth of Europe, the most congested water track in the world, wherefrom half the trade ships of all civilization issued forth, like steel shuttles shot from port to port across the seven seas and interweaving nation with nation. So were we arisen to survey the highway of empires.

But now all traffic clung fast to a million anchors. Few vessels set their white sails and took the water. All Germany and Austria, bottled up by the navy of England, pointed their high prowed merchant ships toward the land and hibernated.

Just then through the great fog silences a ship of war loomed dead ahead. Without a momen''s delay a sudden throbbing in the deck announced a reverse in the engine room. The sea foamed white astern, and the Durham Castle lay to at the beck of a flag signal on the cruiser. She flew a disconsolate Union Jack and a row of little six inchers pointed their noses at us through the gun doors.

"An old line boat," explained my obliging steward. "She's obsolete for first line defence. Good for patrol duty though. A good 'un to hold up German steamers right enough."

The war time experiences of an American who was working his way home from South America on a German freighter were related in THE SUN on March 28. The freighter's voyage ended at the Canary Islands after the outbreak of the war. The story of the American's adventures in getting from the Canaries to England is now narrated below.

Even while he was speaking her gun davits swung out and dropped a small boat alongside. It immediately put off for the Durham Castle with a gold braided Lieutenant at the rudder. Springing up our rope ladder he disappeared into the chart room hand in hand with the captain. We were all ablaze with conjecture again.

"Going to take off the Germans."

"I'll wager you, sir, it means we're in for it."

"Probably the German fleet's out. That's bad for England, that's bad for England."

It was delightfully exciting. The crew began counting noses to see how many men belonged to the naval reserve and might therefore be taken off for the fleet up channel.

A cry sent us all to the rail again, for the gold braided Lieutenant had already put off for his own boat. We watched his departure with considerable relief, though it was hard to believe our gloomy prognostications were after all only false alarms, that our violent prophecies of evil were to be lightly flung aside like April rains. And deep down in our brave hearts of oak we were as tremulous as a maiden with her first suitor.

But the Durham Castle did get away, strange to say. Putting on full speed, she took the seas with great good will as though elated at her narrow escape. Hour after hour she blared through the fog heedless of the half speed regulations for such weather. She had no thought for any regulations now except to hurry on home as fast as her twin screws would carry her.

Early in the afternoon the loud blaring of the fog siren suddenly increased in volume. It was not our own suddenly grown energetic, for it seemed to breathe on us from a distance. Far away we heard it; a long, low, sullen horn blowing, like a lone moose cry over the water.

So we listened through this drifting world of wind and spray—thinking how terrible to collide here. The distant siren was now close at hand. The double bow watch shouted to the double bridge watch that a vessel was looming up dead ahead. The inhabitants of the Durham Castle all turned out to see the mysterious stranger, who crept through the white night and bellowed like a bull moose.

Suddenly it shot out of the mist into our own little world—our house and garden with high fog fence around. Our house and garden sheered suddenly to starboard as the stranger charged bellowing into us like a moose.

"Ach," muttered a disgusted sailor, "she's only a Norway tramp. Be damned if she hadn't ought to get rammed making such an infernal noise over nothing. She's a dirty tramp, that's all she is."

So she was—a tiny craft that nosed under every sea submarine fashion. Each wave broke over her bow and sent a green sea smack against the bridge, and it sneaked past the bridge somehow and swept like a comber on an open beach, plunging finally over the quarterdeck into the white wake of a little chug-chug propeller. It was enough to make the good natured inhabitants of the Durham Castle shriek with laughter, secure in their own high sided twin screw home.

An hour later, still creeping through the fog, we were brought to by another vessel of war—an old British cruiser picketed in midchannel with many more like her and patrolling up and down, up and down like the Coldstream Guards before Buckingham Palace. After another hour of delay and examining of papers, we were allowed to proceed across channel.

In the course of this foggy last afternoon, the Durham Castle blared her way into Plymouth Sound. After passing Eddystone Light we cheered up a bit in spite of fog and talked of England's hills and dales. For some of the colonials had feasted their English eyes for the last four or five years on nothing better than dried grasses and African kopjes with lions and unclad Zulus to boot.

"Good-by, Africa," they were all shouting, and the boys, wild youngsters with steel tendons and sun tanned eyes, repeated hour after hour their crazy song:

He shall die
He shall die
He shall die by the skin of his teeth.

Shortly after passing Eddystone Light a little pilot boat coming along on the opposite tack drew up into the wind and sent off its tender with a pilot for us. No sooner was the pilot aboard than our course changed an entire quarter of the compass. It was just in the nick of time, for a minute later the high sea cliffs of Plymouth showed through the fog to starboard.

Plymouth, a town strangely familiar to American memories, stood waiting for us adrip with the sea's edge and the fog banks. The colonials had raptures of their own. The unfortunate miners who had come home to die of phthisis gazed wistfully at the green hills with their checkerboard of low stone walls between farms.

"It's not a long while we'll be seeing them," one poor fellow exclaimed, not without gentleness. Several years in the diamond mines had made them wealthy in their way. It had also stolen from them the best part of their lives; diamond dust in the lungs, they explained. And knowing what their lives might have been, with sad hearts they faced the future, short as it was, and misty eyed, stared fondly and dreamily over the soft Devon downs.

In the midst of these thoughts there arose as suddenly as an awakening vestryman at the close of the sermon a loud, vibrant, stentorian voice.

"What the devil do you mean, captain, carrying your wireless up there?" the voice roared. "Didn't you get orders from the patrol to dismantle that aerial?"

"No, sir," responded our beloved captain meekly.

"Well, dismantle her right now then."

Truly these naval men are high-handed cusses when they once get control. And this officer was only on a tug boat at that! If Britannia rules the waves it looks as if the Admiralty rules Britannia.

Half an hour later the tugboat admiral returned and called through a megaphone:

"I say, captain, do you want to go to London?"

"Yes, yes," the captain answered to the lord high executioner.

"All right, then. Go ahead. Let the passengers stay who want to. And mind you, no wireless."

"Right, sir," shouted our dear chief with a delighted grin.

Plymouth was a godforsaken hole, anyway, and London cargoes ought to unload at London. We all cheered at this benevolent dispensation of the Admiralty and the stewards smiled broad smiles, dreaming of extra tips in the morning.

And while they dreamed the Durham Castle slowly swallowed her dripping anchor chains and pointed her head up channel. Night in the Channel in peace times is quite an impressive sight. What shall be said of a night in time of war with a thousand searchlights along the shoreline and over the water the twinkling signals of a hundred destroyers patrolling the narrow strait in terrible silence?

The Durham Castle slept little that night. Even though hugging the home shore no light was allowed on deck, nor in the cabins with outside windows on portholes. But along the water there were many strange signals moving.

Far away in the darkness two stars would suddenly appear floating on the water. Approaching nearer they would as suddenly disappear. In their place might be a cross or three red light points or three vertical or four horizontal—grim signals silently stealing over the water like giant glowworms. Perhaps they might pass within a hundred feet of the Durham Castle halt a moment, then abruptly flit away until lost in the distance.

We leaned over the rail and knew they were torpedo boats signalling to each other—we knew this but we saw nothing. With a strange uncanny feeling we stood there on our own ship, a great, fat cow lumbering away from wolves—lean, prairie wolves of the sea sniffing about their unwieldy, helpless victim and stealing sidelong glances at it with their gleaming eyes. And this might have given us great reason to be timid were it not for a comfortable notion that the sea belonged to England.

Furthermore there was dispensed to us in due time some more natural proof that these sea wolves were really the king's own. For about midnight we were halted by three red lights floating in the water in a vertical position. They came dangerously close. At last we were able to discover a long, black object underneath the three vertical lights.

In the darkness little was discernible on board. A small boat suddenly swung out and came alongside the Durham Castle. Somebody threw over a rope ladder. There was a rattle of oars and a man with gold epaulettes and sleeve braid leaped over the rail on deck.

"What the devil!" we muttered in frightened chorus, in spite of our infinite faith in the gunpointers blockading Helgoland.

"'E's gone aboard, 'as 'e?" whispered an old chap in my ear. "What do you think of it?"

"'T's all right," I answered, fondly pressing my American passport, which never left me for a moment.

Then the gentleman in gold epaulettes and sleeve braid reappeared with our beloved captain and silently disappeared again over the side. In the dark only the rattle of oarlocks broke the stillness. The little boat drew away toward the lean sea wolf standing motionless in the offing like a good charger waiting for his master. Down in our engine room I heard the bell ringing to proceed. Gathering headway the old boat again found herself heading for Dover Strait and London. Astern three vertical lights gleamed over the water just where the Durham Castle had been halted a moment before.

"See that big red light over there?" said a sailor pulling at my sleeve. I looked around in a confused way as if the Sphinx were suddenly blinking at me.

"What's that?" I asked abruptly.

"I say, look at that light, yonder."

"What, Dover already?" I exclaimed, peering over the starboard rail.

"Dover, my eye, sir. That's Calais."

I turned and stared at him like one of Wordsworth's divine idiots.

"That's Calais, sir," the sailor repeated. "'Aven't you 'ever 'eard of Calais? 'Ere's your Dover," and suddenly growing patriotic he began describing Dover; how being in England it must necessarily stand upon the left side of the strait, &c.

Dover was nice enough, but having once assured myself that France was actually on the right hand I had perforce to mumble an apology for being so heretical as to confuse Dover with Calais. Then I proceeded to stare at Calais.

On deck early in the morning our strange adventure seemed indeed a nightmare. For the Durham Castle was steaming slowly up the Thames in the mids' of shipping and smoking factories and green Essex fields. On learning we had been stopped three times in the strait after we had all turned in at 1 o'clock, I thought to myself, a nightmare indeed. For day had now driven night, with her strange train of uncanny shadows, completely out of our consciousness. One can hardly play his imagination upon factories and upon river craft with half the sincerity we were capable of during that last night stalking among the destroyers in Dover Strait.

We had seen things to make the eyes of these home staying folk open wider than Durham Castle soup saucers and their simple mouths to gape in unheard of fashion. As for myself I instinctively felt for a halo over my head as due one coming from another world—a strange warrior with stranger tales to tell.

After dropping anchor in midstream beside Tilbury docks all foreigners were summoned to appear for examination in the first class saloon. This was a proper precaution and though unnecessarily severe in the case of Germans it did not detain me long.

"Have you any guns about you?" asked an officer of the London Constabulary, who with two assistants sat erect behind three great yellow registration books.

"No, sir," I responded. "Would you care to see my passport?"

No. That was unnecessary, he responded cheerfully. For he knew well enough that I was American by various liberty or death signs in my eyes and "E Pluribus Unums" in my mouth. They can always tell an American, these foreigners. So he smiled patronage upon me.

Nerve Wracking Sensation of Being Chased by Cruisers and Stealing Up the Channel in a Fog

"You're all right. No necessity for search, officer. You can go."

Wherewith I went, leaping down the companionway to the tune of "Yankee Doodle" and "The Stars and Stripes" done in medley. From Tilbury to London was not over an hour. Still holding my passport sheathed in an inner pocket I dropped off the train at Fenchurch street station in the very heart of London. The heart of London and the heart of England! I a free citizen in a land of subjects! How impressive this distinction felt to me.

I was proudly surveying myself in a bank window when my ears suddenly caught the tramp of approaching troops. There they came down Cannon street making for the station. It was a regiment of territorials, khaki clad, four abreast. There were several signs carried with the words painted in large letters, "It's a long, long way to Tipperary."

Many were smoking quietly, all young chaps, just out of the offices. There was no music, no singing, no band playing. Along the pavements stood all London, stolid and sober faced and looked on with a dazed expression as though not quite sure whether there was any need of it. They found it easier to declare war than to realize it.

After watching them for a while I passed on, intending to discover my uncle somewhere before dark. In the interim I entered a hotel to leave my suit cases. I particularly chose this hotel as convenient to the station and because it had a sober appearance. It was called the "Three Nuns Hotel." What else could a stranger want?

But the manager looked me over and noted my extreme innocence by the aforesaid liberty or death signs in my eyes and "E Pluribus Unums" in my mouth. He resolved to do me an honest turn.

"If you take a drink over there," he whispered, pointing to the bar, which was assaulted by a number of men and about a dozen women I had not noticed before, "be very careful or they will drug your beer and the girls will pick your pockets for you."

For the first time I became really frightened. Here was a place where American passports were no protection. So I gave the manager a shilling for his friendliness and decided to go after my uncle while the going was good.

At the corner of Redcliffe Gardens and Piccadilly an old man was standing and looking at the buses and stroking his white beard. While standing in this place an American suddenly stepped up to him, the two never having met before.

"Pardon, sir, is your name Bates?" asked the American.

"It is," said the Briton, somewhat bewildered.

"Have you by any chance a nephew in Alameda, Cal., named Bates?" continued the American.

"I have. Do you know him?" answered my startled uncle.

"I have known him intimately for twenty-five years," I cried, clasping him to my passport. "I am he."

And that is how the writer, after many thrilling days and nights, fell into the hands of his relatives.